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IT'S NATIONAL GARDEN MONTH

Things to look at

Garden annuals are easy to grow and they do well in all parts of the United States. Among the most popular of the garden annuals are zinnias, marigolds, petunias, and ageratums. Many other kinds are also available.

You can sow annual seeds directly in the beds where the plants are to bloom or you can start early plants indoors and set them out in beds after the weather warms.

You can also buy started plants of many annuals from your local nursery or garden shop. These started plants usually are in bloom when they are offered for sale, which allows you to select the colors you want for your garden. It is an easy task to prepare beds and set out these started plants. The plants provide color from the time they are set out until they are killed by fall frosts.

Most annuals are easy to grow successfully:

- Start with vigorous plants or seeds. The best plan is to buy started plants. Next best is to sow fresh seed where the plants are to grow. Usually, the least satisfactory plan is to start your own plants indoors.
- Prepare soil in the flower beds thoroughly.
- Set out plants or sow seed at the recommended times. Plants set out too early may be killed by frost. Seed sown too early will not germinate until the seed warms – and by that time it may rot.
- Provide the recommended distances between plants when thinning seedlings or setting out started plants. Proper spacing is necessary for fullest development of the plants.

Selecting Annuals

You probably already have decided which kind of annuals you want to grow; annuals are high on everyone's list of favorite flowers. If you have not decided, however, a good plan is to visit other gardens in your area to see which annuals are doing well there and which are most attractive to you.

Perhaps you have a specific purpose in mind for annuals - to provide a mass of color for brightening the dark foliage of background shrubs, to fill in beds until shrubs grow large enough to be decorative in their own right, or to overplant bulb beds to provide color after spring-flowering bulbs have passed. If so, you can choose annuals for your garden by considering their characteristics, and deciding which of the flowers meet your requirements.

Some annuals are best for use as bedding plants, grouped to give large masses of color in the garden. Some are best as border plants. Some are best for low edging around beds and walks. And some - the tall ones - are best used as quick-growing screens.

Most of the annuals are sources of cut flowers. Some of them also are sources of plants for drying - to be used indoors during the winter.

Whatever your requirements for garden flowers, you probably can find an annual flowering that is suitable.

Buying Seed

To get a good start toward raising vigorous plants, buy good seed.

Be sure your seed is fresh. Do not buy it too far in advance of planting time; for best results, allow no more than a three-month interval.

Old seed saved from previous years may lose much of its vitality under household conditions. It tends to germinate slowly and to produce poor seedlings.

Keep the seed dry and cool until you plant it. Special instructions for storage are printed on some seed packets. Follow these instructions.

Planting Times

Do not be in a rush to start seeds or set out started plants. As a general rule, delay setting out started plants until after the last frost.

Most seeds will not germinate well until the soil warms to about 60 degrees. If they are sowed in soil that is cooler than this, they will remain dormant until the soil warms and may rot before they germinate.

Exceptions to this rule are babysbreath, cornflower, gaillardia, globe-amaranth, phlox, poppy, salpiglossis, cleome, stock, strawflower, summer cypress, sweet alysium, and sweetpea. Seeds of these annuals can be sowed in early spring, as soon as the soil can be worked.

Many annuals can be seeded throughout the growing season for a prolonged display of color.

Start seed indoors no sooner than eight weeks before the average date for the last killing frost in your area. If you start seed earlier than this, the plants will be too large for satisfactory transplanting by the time the weather is warm enough for them to be set outside.

Things to eat

The following vegetables are recommended for Virginia by the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service (numbers in parentheses indicate days from planting to beginning of harvest period):

Asparagus - Mary Washington (3-4 years), Beacon (3-4 years).

Beans, bush - Contender (60), Dwarf Horticultural (65), Gator Green (55), Slenderette (55), Kentucky Wonder (60);

Beans, Lima - Thaxter (70), Jackson Wonder (65), Fordhook 242 (75);

Beets - Ruby Queen (60), Detroit Dark Red (60);

Broccoli - Premium Crop (60), Bonanza (56), Green Goliath (60);

Brussels Sprouts - Jade Cross (110);

Cabbage - Stonehead (75), Round Up (90), Little Rock (66), Guardian (60), Two Season (65);

Carrots - Gold King (72), Danvers (72), Imperator (75);

Chard, Swiss - Sundance (65), Reward (63), Pennifresh (65), Seneca Scout (55), Early Sunglow (64), Silver Queen (90), Golden Giant (60);

Cucumber - Dasher II (60), Gemini (58), Sweet Success (58), Slicemaster (60), Pickler and Pickler Pak (58), Bush Pickler (48), Bush Champion (52), Salad Bowl (50), Grant Lakes (60), Dark Green Boston (70), Parriss Island Cos (75), Buttercrunch (65);

Muskmelon - Ambrosia (82), Super Star (86), Short and Sweet (85), Venus (90);

Mustard - Tendergreen F1 (40), Southern Giant Curled (45);

Okra - White Portugal (100), Silvercid (100), Clemson (110), Mustang (118), Yellow Burpee (110);

Peas - Alaska (56), Novella (63), Greater Progress (62), Sugar Snap (70), Wando (67), Green Arrow (70);

Peas, Southern - Queen Anne (58);

Purple Hull Crowder (60-70);

Pepper - Lady Bell (110), Keystone, Hungarian Wax (100), Red Cayenne (110);

Potato, Irish - Pungo (Eastern Virginia - 100), Superior (Eastern Virginia - 100), Prentice (100), Kennebec (Western Virginia - 112);

Potato, Sweet - Centennial (120), Jewel (120), Baker (130);

Pumpkin - Funny Face (100), Spirit (105), Howden (110), Spookie (110), Sugar (110);

Radish - Cherry Belle (24), Stop Lite (24), Icicle (30);

Spinach - Melody (50);

Squash, Summer - Butterbar (50), Goldbar (50), Goldrush (50), Aristocrat Zucchini (50);

Squash, Winter - Tableking (80), Table Queen (85), Gold Nugget (85), Butternut (90), Waltham Butternut (85);

Tomato - Jetstar (70), Jetsetter (70), Better Boy VFN (105), Sweet 100 (68);

Turnip - Tokyo Cross (40), Purple Top White Globe (55), All Top F1 (45);

Watermelon - Petite Sweet (88), Sugar Bush (75), Royal Charleston (80), Crimson Sweet (80), Top Yield (86).

Planting times

Recommended spring planting dates for this area are: Asparagus - first week in March through first week in April; Bush Beans - second week in April through first week in July; Pole Bean - second week in April through first week in July; Lima Beans - second week in May through third week in July; Beets - second week in March through third week in April; Broccoli, seed - July, transplants - first week in April through first week in May; Cabbage, seed - first week in June through first week in July, transplants - second week in March through first week in May; Carrots - second week in March through third week in April; Cucumbers - first week in May through third week in May; Eggplant - fourth week in April through third week in May; Bibb Lettuce - second week in March through third week in April; Leaf Lettuce - first week in March through third week in April; Onion sets - second week in March through third week in April; Garden Peas - second week in March through third week in April; White Potatoes - first week in March through second week in April; Radishes - first week in March through first week in June; Sweet Corn - third week in April through first week in July; Spinach - third week in February through third week in March; Summer Squash - first week in May through third week in June; Tomato transplants - third week in April through first week in June; Watermelons - second week in May through first week in June.

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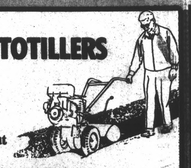

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